

Crime Trends in Bulgaria:

Police Statistics
and Victimization
Surveys



CENTER FOR
THE STUDY OF
DEMOCRACY

This report was written by **Tihomir Bezlov**, Senior Analyst and **Philip Gounev**, Research Fellow, both at the Center for the Study of Democracy. Comments and contributions were also made by **Alexander Stoyanov**, Director, Vitosha Research and **Maria Yordanova**, Director of CSD's Law Program.

The Center for the Study of Democracy would like to acknowledge the valuable comments, suggestions and support of the following individuals:

Boyko Kotzev
Danail Petleshkov

Deputy Minister of Interior
Head of Coordination,
Information and Analysis Division,
National Police Service, Ministry of Interior
Varna Free University

Prof. Boyan Stankov



The report is published with the financial support of the US Department of Justice

ISBN 954-477-126-3

© 2005, Center for the Study of Democracy
All rights reserved.

5 Alexander Zhendov Str., 1113 Sofia
phone: (+359 2) 971 3000, fax: (+359 2) 971 2233
www.csd.bg, csd@online.bg

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
1 CRIME DATA: POLICE REGISTERED CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS	7
2 POLICE RECORDS AND VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS COMPARED	11
2.1 GENERAL COMPARISON.....	11
2.2 SURVEYING THE VARIOUS CRIMES.....	14
2.2.1 CAR THEFT	14
2.2.2 THEFT FROM CARS	17
2.2.3 MOTORCYCLE THEFT.....	18
2.2.4 BICYCLE THEFT.....	18
2.2.5 BURGLARY.....	18
2.2.6 ROBBERY.....	21
2.2.7 THEFT OF PERSONAL PROPERTY AND PICKPOCKETING	22
2.2.8 SEXUAL OFFENCES	24
3 VICTIMS OF CRIME: RISK PROFILE.....	25
3.1 PREVALENCE	25
3.2 ODDS-RATIO	26
4 REPORTING CRIME	28
4.1 REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING VARIOUS TYPES OF CRIME	29
4.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POLICE.....	32
5 FACTORS OF CHANGE IN BULGARIA'S CRIME RATE	34
5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS	34
5.2 MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND JUDICIAL BODIES: COUNTERACTION OF CRIME	36
APPENDIX	
VICTIMIZATION SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The crime situation in Bulgaria became an acute political question in the early years of transition to democracy. During the period 1990–1992 the police registered a three to fourfold increase in crime across the country. For some categories of crimes, the increase was as much as tenfold. In the past 15 years, for the media crime news reports were easiest to sell. At the same time, the stark reality was that almost every Bulgarian family became a victim of crime. These developments transformed the issues of the country's crime rate and crime trends in one of most important political issues. For these reasons, the collection and interpretation of criminal statistics, took on increasingly political overtones. There is little public debate, though, about crime-rate data, the ways it is collected and interpreted.

The report *Crime Trends in Bulgaria: Police Statistics and Victimization Surveys* uses a crime victimization survey as an alternative analytical tool to make an **independent assessment of the crime situation in Bulgaria for the period 2001–2004**. The crime victimization survey polls people's experiences with crime. In the United States and in many EU countries government authorities or independent institutions have been conducting victimization surveys since the 1960s. Unlike official government crime statistics, the regular crime victimization surveys help the police and government authorities, as well as the public to understand:

- whether the official police crime data reflect the real crime rate and crime trends;
- the volume of the unreported crime;
- the reasons victims do not report crimes to the police;
- whether the police avoids registering reported crimes;
- the profile of the social groups that are most at risk of falling victims to crime.

This report is different from any previous analysis of the crime situation in Bulgaria in several ways:

- It examines **the crime trends** for the period 2001–2004 by comparing the crime level according to the police-registered crimes with the victim-reported crime data from two victimization surveys. The surveys were conducted in July 2002 and November 2004 using a methodology developed by the United Nations Interregional Criminal Justice Research Institute.

- The report uses data from several international crime victimizations surveys to compare the crime level in Bulgaria with the crime situation in 15 industrialized countries.

Key findings:

- **Crime trends:** According to results of the victimization surveys, during 2001 – 2004 the crime rate in Bulgaria decreased. This trend is in accordance with that of police-registered crime data. The share of adults that became crime victims during that period fell from 17% per year to 14% per year. The total number of crimes came down from close to 600,000 in 2001 to around 300,000 in 2004.
- **Crime level:** The level of crime in Bulgaria is comparable with the crime levels in most EU countries and the United States. For most categories of crimes, the risk that a person could become a crime victim is lower in Bulgaria than in other industrialized countries. Bulgaria ranks 14th among the 16 countries compared. In 2001, for instance, 17% of the population (over 15 years of age) had become a victim of one of 11 crime categories examined in the victimization survey. This is lower than most countries – USA (21%), Poland (23%) and Australia (30%).
- **Unreported crimes:** Victims of crime in Bulgaria do not report about 53% of the criminal incidents to the police. The percentage is different for the various crime categories. While 81% of stolen vehicles are reported, only 30% of the robbery victims look for police assistance.
- **Police crime data:** The police do not record a significant share of the crimes that citizens report. The internal police-performance evaluation methods create stimuli for hiding and manipulating crime reports. Such actions lead to understatements of the real crime rate from the district to the national level. Such practices are observed mostly for non violent crimes, such as thefts from vehicles, but also for robberies, about 75% of which are registered as thefts or pickpocketing incidents.
- **Factors of the falling crime rate:** The most important factors for the decreasing crime rate are the fall in unemployment; the aging of the population and the reduction of the number of young males (15-25 year olds) due to low birth rate and emigration; the emigration of many criminals to the EU after the establishment of a visa-free regime with most European countries; and the anti-crime efforts of the police and the judiciary.

1 CRIME DATA: POLICE REGISTERED CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

The level of crime in Bulgaria became an acute political question in the beginning of the transition period. For the period 1990-1992 the police registered a three to fourfold increase in the crime rate across the country. For some types of crime the increase was as much as tenfold.¹ For the media, in the past fifteen years, crime news reports were easiest to sell. At the same time, the stark reality was that almost every household became a victim of crime. These developments turned the country's crime rate and crime trends into some of the most important political issues. The collection and interpretation of crime statistics, took on increasingly political overtones.

However, **questions about crime data and its credibility** with the public rarely appear in the public debate. This analysis will not explore the reasons for crime in Bulgaria in the post fifteen years, nor will it consider potential policies for limiting crime. It will not discuss organized crime or what the police refer to as "financial crimes", in other words corruption, financial fraud, etc. The main objective of this analysis is to start a debate on whether crime data reflects reality, on the alternative sources of information and on the level of crime in Bulgaria compared to Western countries and countries in transition.

Making crime a partisan topic in countries such as Bulgaria, raises the question whether it is possible to discuss crime objectively. Only the police collect crime statistics but the channels and methods of information gathering and processing are not transparent. At the same time, the Ministry of Interior (Mol) is a centralized institution, headed by key politicians from the governing party, whose political interest dictates them to offer positive news, such as a decreasing crime rate. The various Mol agencies share this interest – lowering crime is usually interpreted as improved effectiveness.

In this context, having **alternative sources of information about the national crime situation is** of utmost importance to countries, where the governing institutions are not stable enough and where political self-interests are still a problem to deal with. Victimization surveys, a method that has been employed for over thirty years in the US and Western Europe, are

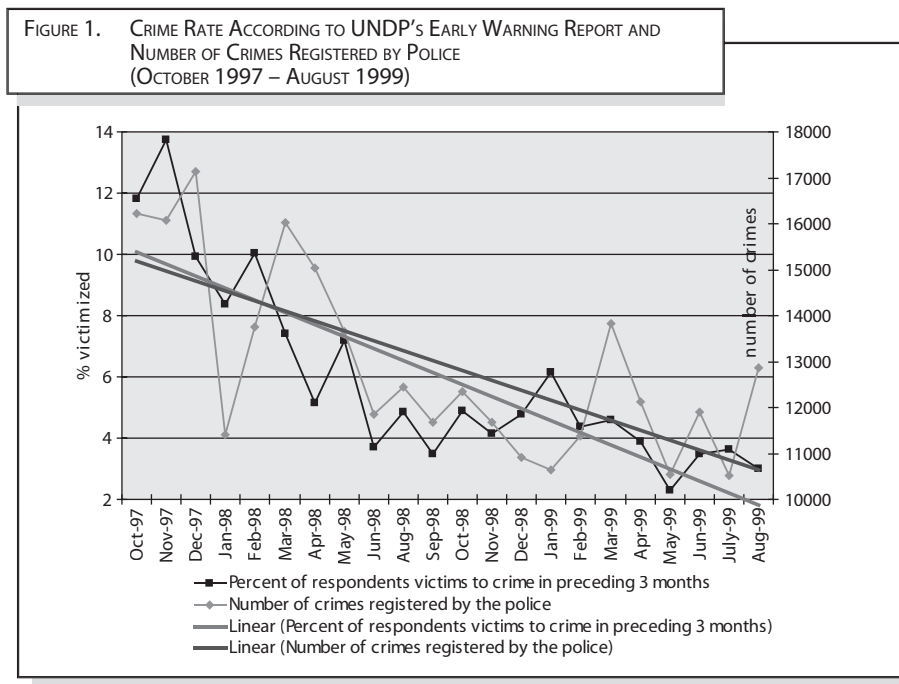
¹ This is an approximate estimate as the multiple changes in the methodology of police statistics (including the one in 1990) make it hard to come up with exact numbers.

² The US criminologist Hans von Hentig is the founder of victimological research as a separate sub-discipline in criminology with his book *The Criminal and His Victim* first published in 1948. The first national crime victimization survey was conducted in the USA in 1966.

such alternative source of information.² In a victimization survey, information is gathered through face-to-face or phone interviews. The survey is based on a nationally representative population sample. Random sampling of respondents guarantees that the number of victims of crime and their families that fall into the sample reflects with sufficient accuracy both the total number of specific crimes committed and the distribution of these crimes across different socio-demographic population groups. These surveys use the same methodology as the more common marketing, demographic, or sociological surveys. Thus, there are enough reasons to consider information collected by a victimization survey reliable.

Such surveys are often conducted by non-government organizations in order to limit the possibility of data manipulation for political ends. Since 1997 a number of private and public institutions in Bulgaria have conducted victimization surveys, using a variety of methodologies.

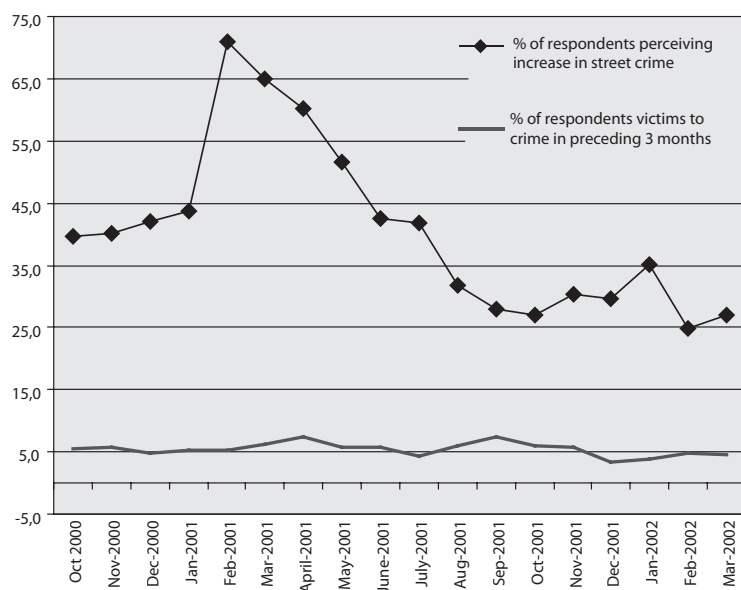
In discussing the reliability and applicability of victimization surveys, it is worth mentioning a specific example of their use in Bulgaria. Following the political and economic crisis of the late 1996 and early 1997, a Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) team, participating in UNDP's Early Warning project, included in its monthly surveys a set of victimization questions.³ This was done to test the hypothesis that the police crime data could be politically manipulated but it turned out not to be the case. Data from the monthly surveys confirmed the declining trend of police-registered crime for the period after 1998. For the following two years, crime data extracted from the victimization block of questions, followed, with minor deviations, the changes in crime levels reported by the Ministry of Interior (see Figure 1).



Bulgaria's experience supports the thesis that victimization surveys are a reliable crime analysis tool. It possesses a high degree of political neutrality and is not burdened by the population's political opinions and attitudes. For instance, in late 2000 and early 2001, when the country witnessed a sharp change in public attitudes towards political developments, the victimization survey did not register any significant changes in the respondents' personal/household experience with crime (see Figure 2).

³ UNDP, Early Warning Report, Sofia 1998, pp. 93-96.

FIGURE 2. OPINIONS ON STREET CRIME LEVEL VS. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF CRIME (OCTOBER 2000 – MARCH 2002)



Source: Victimization questions section registering experience from the last three months (UNDP, Early Warning Reports 1997-2002)

As evident in the figure above, public opinion on street crime trends in the period January-March 2001⁴ is one of increase. In the same survey, however, respondents did not report any marked increase of personal experience with crime.

Given that there is already a body of knowledge in this field in Bulgaria⁵, and there is a need to compare the country with industrialized Western countries, more consistent comparison between victimization survey findings and police records is warranted. Such comparative analysis would provide grounds for discussing the crime situation and trends based on sound objective criteria rather than on the views of politicians or law-enforcement and judiciary practitioners.

⁴ Due to the high crime rate in late January 2001 the parliament held a no-confidence vote on the government but it survived it. Right after the vote taxi drivers blocked the parliamentary building area in protest to a murder case in which a taxi driver's child had been killed.

⁵ Data from the monthly UNDP surveys within the Early Warning reports conducted between November 1997 and October 2002 have been used in this paper. Other surveys analyzed for the purposes of this report (but not necessarily discussed in it) are: the Sofia victimization survey (2000) and the national victimization survey (2002 r.) both of which were part of the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) initiative of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); various Vitosha Research surveys (2000-2003), National Statistical Institute victimization surveys from 2000 and 2001, and data from the 2003 victimization survey of the National Center for Public Opinion Studies (NCPOS).

TABLE 1. POLICE RECORDS AND VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS

	Mol Statistics	Victimization Surveys
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist all Mol agencies in their law-enforcement practice by providing crime statistics. Help society monitor police authorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car-theft, theft <i>from</i> cars, car vandalism; Motorcycle / bicycle theft; Burglary and attempted burglary, personal property theft; Robbery, sexual incidents, assault/threat.
Types of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crimes against the person (murder, rape, bodily injury, etc.); Household crimes (burglary, etc.); Crimes threatening the public (vehicle theft, arson, etc.); Financial crimes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car-theft, theft from cars, car vandalism; Motorcycle / bicycle theft; Burglary and attempted burglary, personal property theft; Robbery, sexual incidents, assault/threat.
Data collection methods	The police record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> crimes reported by citizens; crimes reported in the media. 	A household survey based on interviews: data on victimized persons and households is gathered, irrespective of whether the crimes were reported to the police or not and, respectively, whether police recorded it or not.
Crime level indicators	Number of crimes per 100,000 population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of persons victimized (prevalence) number of incidents per 100 persons (incidence)
Representative value	Substantial: the annual number of registered crimes is usually over 100,000.	In Bulgaria such surveys use a nationally representative sample with at least 1,100 households. In the US the sample size used is 60,000 households in the US and 46,000 households in the UK.
Frequency of data collection	Continuous	Periodic. National representative surveys were conducted in 2001 (National Statistical Institute), in 2002 (UNICRI), in 2003 (NCPOS), 2004 (CSD). Surveys for Sofia were conducted in 1997 and 2000 (UNICRI), and for Varna in 2004 (Varna Free University).
Differences	Record data on crimes against private companies, public institutions, and minors (under 15).	Do not include data on crimes against private companies, public institutions, minors (below 15), and crimes by police and armed forces personnel.

The present report has several levels of comparison. **The main analysis compares the 2002 – 2003 crimes data from the police statistics with victim’s experiences from a November 2004 nationally representative victimization survey.** Where appropriate, references and comparisons are made with the first crime victimization survey, conducted in July 2002. Both victimization surveys used were developed according to the methodology of the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS), a project launched in 1989 by UNICRI which is associated with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). This allowed for a comparison with data from victimization surveys from countries that had also applied the ICVS methodology. Wherever possible an international comparison is also mad between Bulgarian police and other police data.

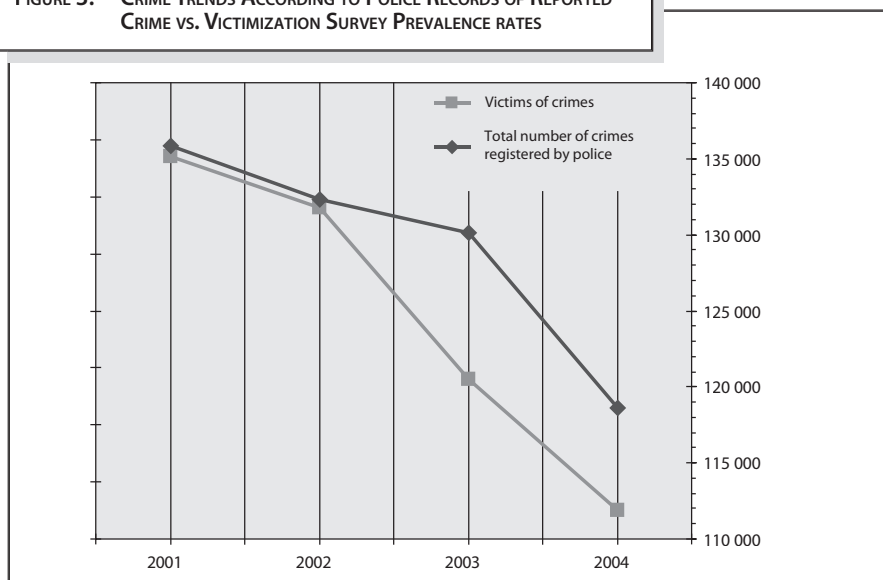
2 POLICE RECORDS AND VICTIMIZATION SURVEYS COMPARED

2.1 General Comparison

The present analysis draws on two main measurements to analyze the victimization surveys—*prevalence* and *incidence*. *Prevalence rates* are the percentage of respondents who experienced a certain crime once or more in a given period of time. *Incidence rates* express the number of crimes experienced by each 100 people in the sample for a given period. These count all incidents against victims who may have experienced more than one incident during a given year.

The levels of the various crimes in Bulgaria are evaluated through questions about the respondents' experience with eleven categories of crime. This report focuses on seven of them because of their proximity and comparability to police crime categories. The main conclusion of the report is that **the victimization surveys confirm the declining crime rate that the police records have shown in the 2001–2004 period** (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. CRIME TRENDS ACCORDING TO POLICE RECORDS OF REPORTED CRIME VS. VICTIMIZATION SURVEY PREVALENCE RATES



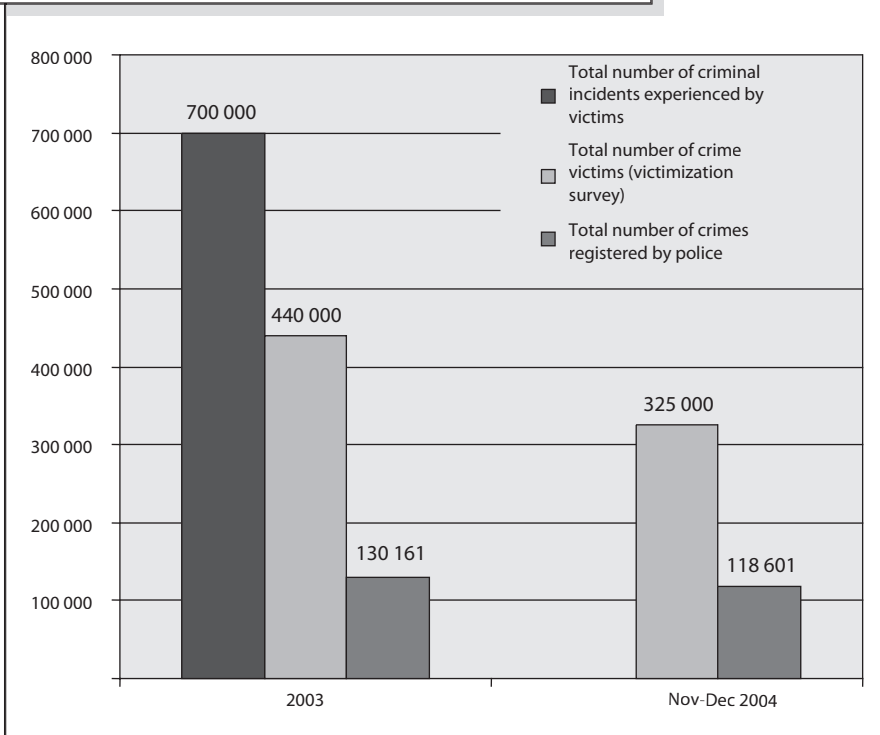
The prevalence rates, that is, the number of crime victims, are falling at a faster pace than evident in the police records. This leads to the second main finding of this report, that the **actual number of crimes is far larger than shown by police data**.

Comparison between the prevalence rate⁶ for 2003 and 2004 (until November) from the victimization survey with the police data identifies more than twofold difference in the number of crimes that each source recorded (see Figure 4). To be

⁶ Two sets of variables were used in the calculation of the annual number of victims. The first set consisted of five variables when the respondents were asked whether their family had experienced any household crime. The number of victims is calculated on the basis of the total number of households in Bulgaria, where 1% corresponds to 27,000 people. The second set includes two variables, identifying personal crimes. Calculations are made on the number of adult population, where 1% corresponds to 65,000 people.

more precise one should compare rather the number of incidences. Then, it may be seen that for 2003 the crimes reported in the victimization survey are five times more than the ones registered by the police.⁷

FIGURE 4. NUMBER OF CRIMES ACCORDING TO VICTIMS AND ACCORDING TO POLICE RECORDS



The question of how such wide gap could exist between the victim reports and police records has a wide range of answers. **The two most important are that most victims do not report the crime, and that there are different “filters” in the police through which much of the reported crime is not recorded.** These two basic conclusions are interpreted in the sections analyzing individual crimes.

A comprehensive evaluation of the crime level in Bulgaria requires a comparative assessment of the country internationally. Two types of data are presented below and are used for the cross-country comparisons. Firstly, there is the analytical comparison of police records. As a method, it

is rather imprecise because some countries consider a broader spectrum of offences as crimes (such as the inclusion of certain traffic violations).

TABLE 2. THE CRIME RATE IN BULGARIA 1998 – 2003

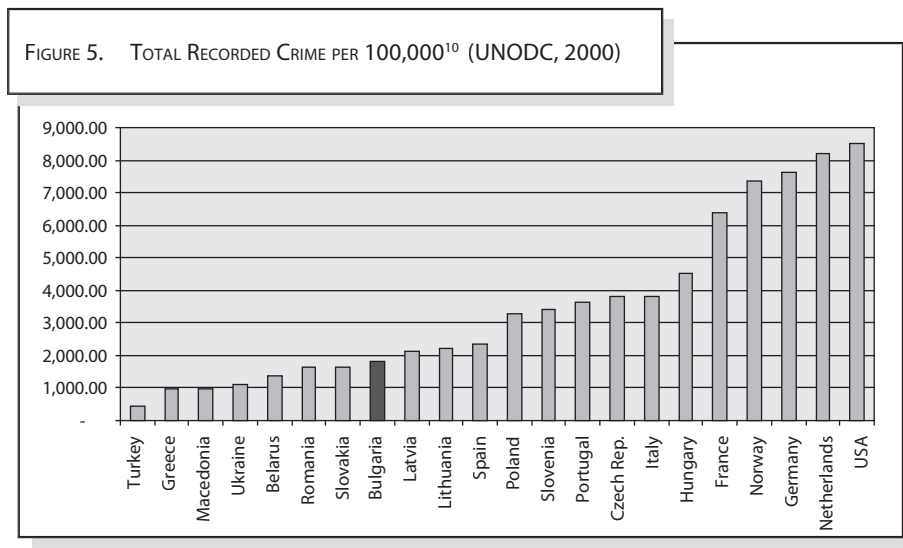
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Conventional crimes ⁸	149,563	132,872	137,637	135,863	132,320	130,161
per 100,000	1,817	1,622	1,673	1,722	1,687	1,659
% change		-11%	3%	3%	-2%	-2%
Financial crimes ⁹	14,986	15,470	12,385	12,446	13,706	14,499
Total (conventional and financial)	164,549	148,342	150,022	148,309	146,026	144,660
Total per 100,000	1,999	1,811	1,823	1,879	1,861	1,844
Total % change	-	-9%	1%	3%	-1%	-1%

⁷ The method that authors of the survey have chosen, is to ask “how many times a respondent has been victimized”, only when a calendar year has expired. Since the 2004 victimization survey was conducted in November 2004 data was not included in the present analysis.

⁸ Source: National Police Service and Ministry of Interior.

⁹ Mol data quoted in: National Statistics Institute, *Statistical Yearbook, 2003*, p. 43.

The UNODC periodically compiles crime statistics from the UN member states. The most recent publicly available country data is for the year 2000. At the start of 2005, the UNODC was still processing information about 2001 and 2002 figures. For this reason the present report quotes the 2000 UN data. The table below makes it clear that the figure of 1,823 crimes per 100,000 population places Bulgaria close to other Southeast European countries. The big difference with Western Europe and the US can be partially explained with a better police capacity in industrialized countries to record crime, as well as the wider range of crime categories included in the police records there.



Victimization survey data support comparisons much better. One such comparison of victimization surveys conducted in 2000¹¹ is to be found in the report *Criminal Victimization in Seventeen Industrialised Countries: Key-findings from the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey*.¹² Throughout the present study we have used the country data and the analytical framework used there to compare the data from the Bulgarian victimization surveys from 2002 and 2004.

Figure 6 compares Bulgaria’s general prevalence rate (for 2001)—**the percentage of respondents who experienced a specific crime once or more** – with that of 15 other countries (for 1999). The prevalence rate summarizes data gathered through survey questions about eleven main types of crime:

- Car-theft, theft from cars, and car vandalism;
- Motorcycle and bicycle theft;
- Burglary and attempted burglary;
- Personal property theft;
- Robbery;
- Sexual offences;
- Assault/threat.

International comparisons show that people in Bulgaria are less likely to be victimized than those in EU countries and the USA. Yet, victimization risks differ less than the comparison between police records may suggest. For instance, police statistics indicate that the USA has 4.7 times as many crimes as does Bulgaria, whereas victimization survey results (see Figure 6) point that

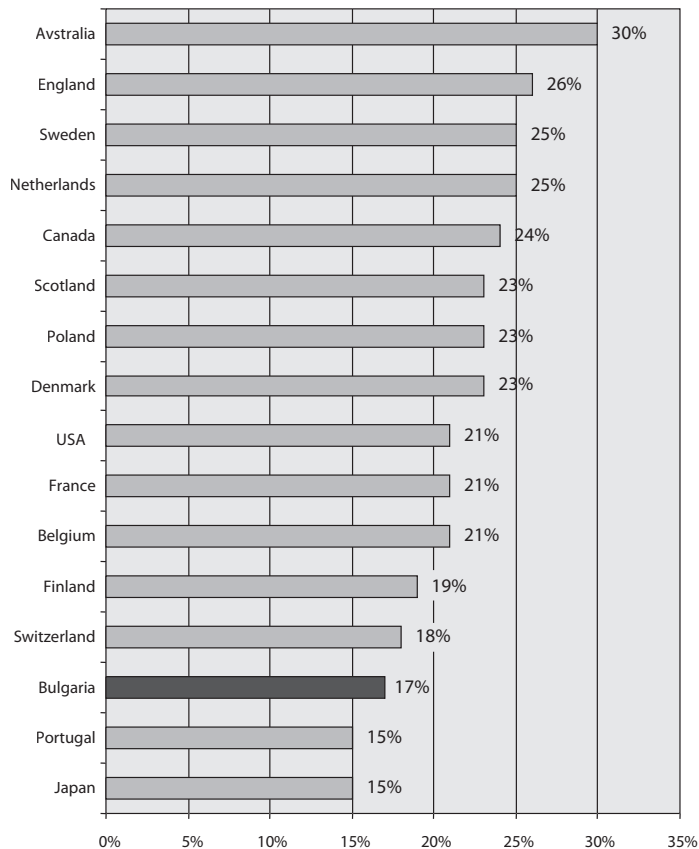
¹⁰ Source: UNODC, 2000

¹¹ Although the 2002 Bulgarian survey was in a group with about 40 similar surveys, the UNODC has not yet publicized its findings; this is why, the data compared in this report come from the preceding surveys in the year 2000. **Bulgaria’s data in all graphs is from the 2002 victimization survey.**

¹² Van Kesteren, J.N., Mayhew, P. & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2000) ‘Criminal Victimization in Seventeen Industrialised Countries: Key-findings from the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey’. The Hague, Ministry of Justice, WODC

merely 24% more Americans are victimized. Nonetheless, such conclusions should also be made cautiously since the reality is distorted by statistical errors and cultural specificities in different countries.

FIGURE 6. ALL CRIMES: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED ONCE OR MORE (PREVALENCE RATE) (ICVS, 2000)



2.2 Surveying the Various Crimes

It should be noted that sampling methods¹³ may be adequately used only to survey volume crime, i.e. crime types with sufficiently high incidence during the referenced period so that victims are captured in a nationally representative sample. For instance, nationally representative surveys might not include any victims to certain rarely encountered crimes, only a few dozen or a few hundred of which occur annually in Bulgaria.¹⁴

2.2.1 Car Theft

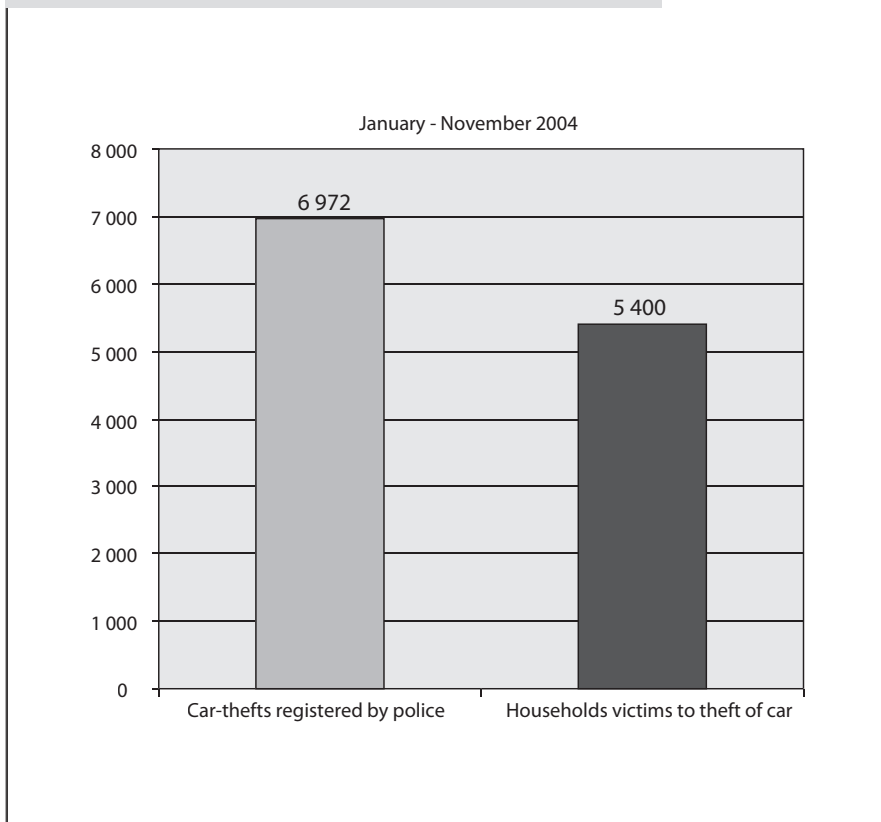
The number of car thefts recorded by the police in 2004 is paradoxically higher than that recorded by the victimization survey (see Figure 7). One

¹³ As countries with established victimization survey experience have found out, the shorter the timeframe, the better the victims' recall. At the same time, data are prone to distortion again when the reference period is shorter than 12 months.

¹⁴ The average sample for Bulgaria varies between 1,000 and 2,000 households. In comparison, the US National Crime Survey (NCS) conducted by the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Justice Statistics uses a sample of 60,000 households, or about 135,000 individuals. The British Crime Survey conducted by the Home Office has a sample of 46,000 households.

reason for this disparity may be the increasing tendency of car owners to report a car theft when actually their car is sold for scrap. This is done to avoid paying overdue taxes or fines of which stolen car owners are exempt. The statistical error could explain the remaining difference between the survey and the police data.

FIGURE 7. CAR THEFTS RECORDED BY POLICE VS. CAR THEFTS IDENTIFIED BY VICTIMIZATION SURVEY



However, the most important finding for this crime is that police records and survey results have registered very similar numbers. Such proximity of data may be explained with the exceptionally low latency level—only 4.3 % of respondents claimed they had not reported the theft to the police in 2003. One reason for this is that insurance companies do not acknowledge claims unless the car theft is reported to and registered by the police. Out of 3.1 million registered vehicles in Bulgaria, only 270 thousand have car theft insurance¹⁵—these are the cars most at risk though, and the ones most often stolen, usually new or expensive cars.

Another noteworthy survey result is the refusal level for the question whether the car theft victim contacted the police—14.7% of respondents

victimized in the last five years did not reply. These might be people who have “bought back” their car after it was stolen. Such practice is particularly popular for uninsured vehicles. After the vehicle is stolen, the thieves call the owner and offer to return it for a certain amount of money, usually much below the market value of the of the vehicle.

There are two types of international automobile theft data. Figure 8 represents recorded car thefts per 100,000 population.¹⁶ This data, however, do not identify the real situation in Bulgaria and elsewhere since Western Europe and the US generally have more automobiles per 100,000 people which means a much higher car theft risk.

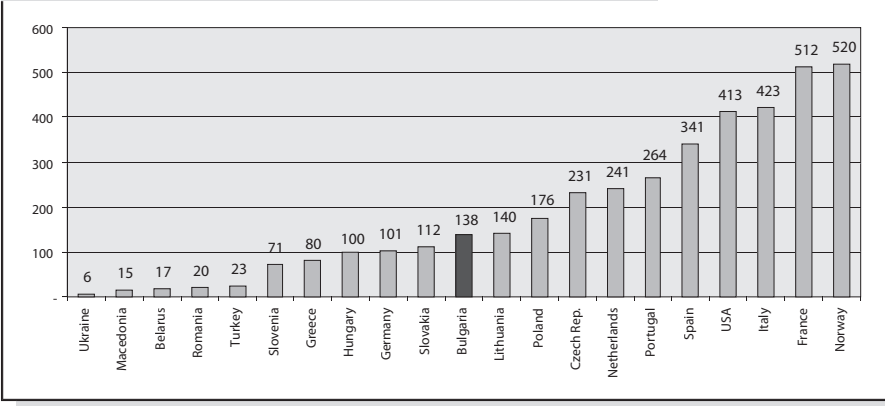
International crime victimization surveys prove a more reliable tool to compare car theft.¹⁷ (see Figure 9). According to the survey data, car owners

¹⁵ According to Ministry of Interior data provided to CSD.

¹⁶ UNODC, *The Seventh United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (1998 – 2000)*.

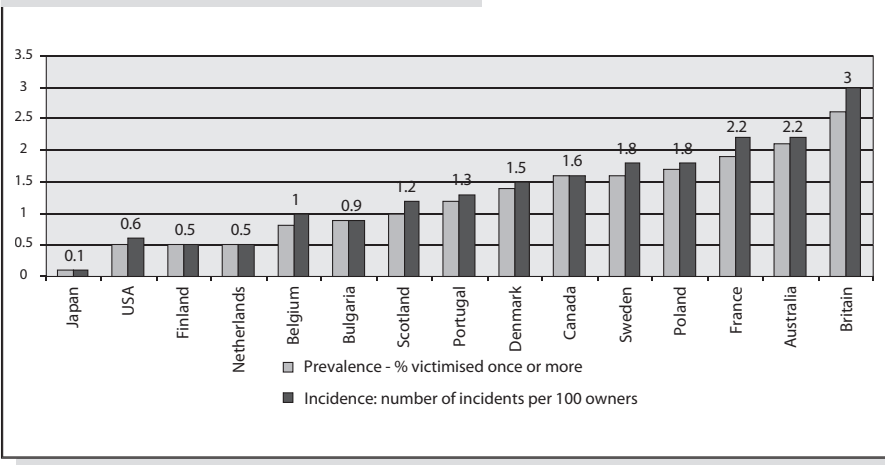
¹⁷ Van Kesteren, J.N., Mayhew, P. & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2000) ‘Criminal Victimization in Seventeen Industrialised Countries: Key-findings from the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey’. The Hague, Ministry of Justice, WODC.

FIGURE 8. TOTAL RECORDED AUTOMOBILE THEFTS PER 100,000 POPULATION¹⁸ (UNODC, 2000)



in Bulgaria are at a higher risk of car theft compared to car owners for instance, in the US or the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the risk in Bulgaria remains lower than in Poland, the other East European country covered by the ICVS. Such low risk level is due to the high average age (19 years) of motor vehicles in Bulgaria. Besides, the number of sham thefts for the purpose of insurance frauds in the US is quite high.

FIGURE 9. THEFT OF CARS (ICVS, 2000)



As a rule, the margin between prevalence and incidence levels is small since with car-thefts the probability of being victimized more than once is low.

The reasons behind car theft in the various countries should also be kept in mind when making comparisons. A credible indicator in this case would be the recovery rate of stolen cars. High recovery rates in countries such as Sweden (97 %), Denmark (96 %) or the US (80 %) are probably due to the fact that the

majority of thefts there are for joyriding. In addition, ICVS analysts suggest that private vehicles in these countries are more often equipped with stolen-car tracking devices.¹⁹ The lower recovery rates in the Netherlands (65 %) or Poland (47 %) may be because of a different reason behind the thefts—to resell the stolen vehicles.

Bulgaria’s victimization survey captures a deterioration in 2001—30% of respondents state their cars were not recovered, and their share grows to 33% in 2003. Notably, there is also another paradox in car theft trends. Police records for 2003 point to a recovery rate of 11.8%, while according to the victimization survey the share of recovered vehicles is 52.4%. This difference may be explained again with the so-called “buy back” practice. Some of the owners answered that their cars were recovered by the police while they, actually, bought them back from the thieves. According to one police estimate, in the late 1990s as much as 30% of the cars might have been recovered in this manner.²⁰

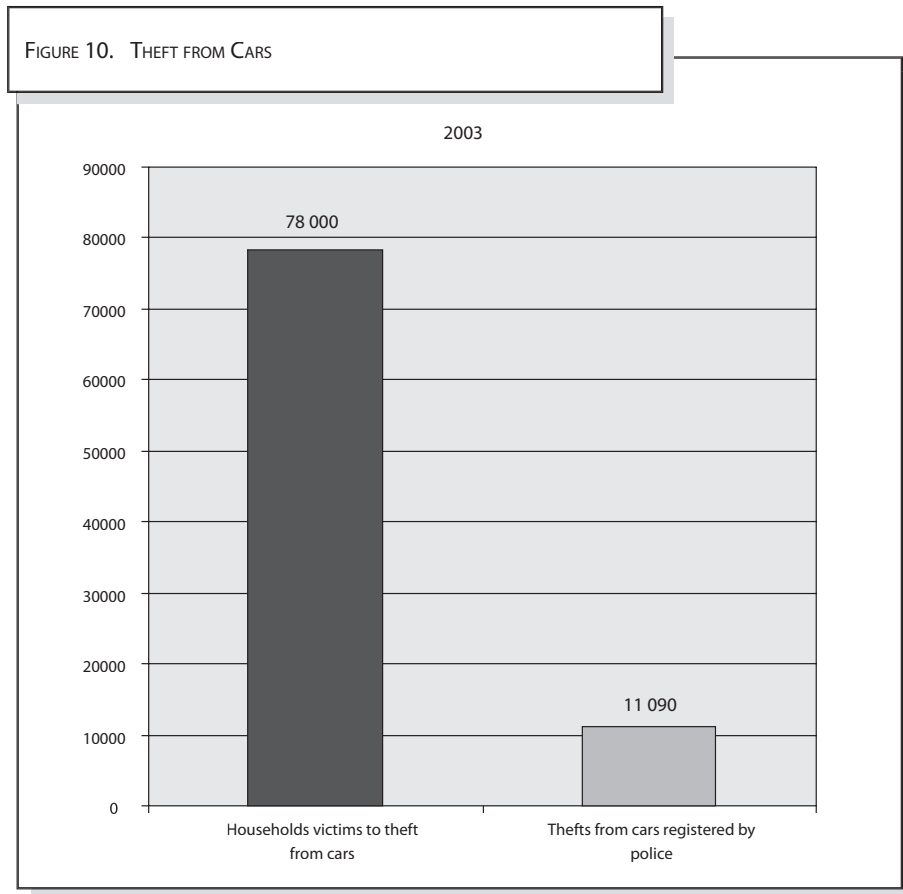
¹⁸ Source: UNODC, 2000

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁰ Interview with Mol official, 18 January 2005.

2.2.2 Theft from Cars

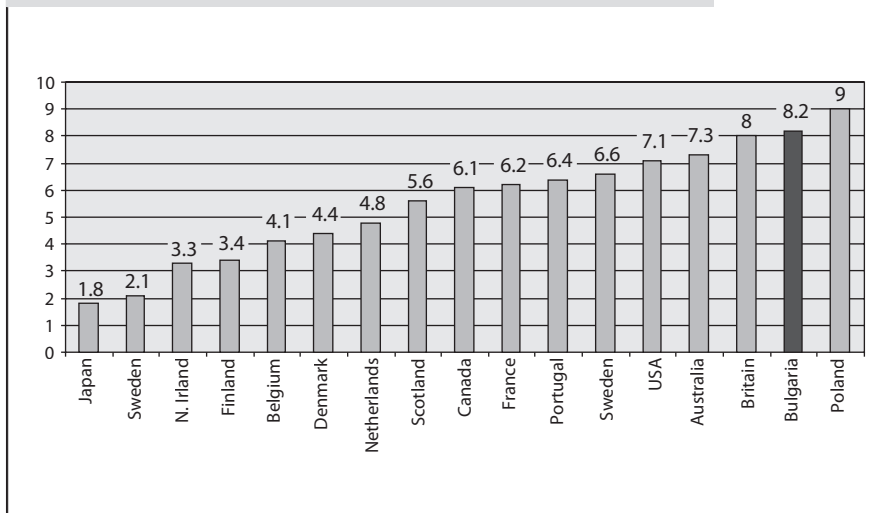
In contrast to automobile thefts, the gap between police and victimization survey records are quite high when theft of possessions or parts from cars is concerned. As can be seen in Figure 10, there is a sevenfold difference in the number of incidents, registered by police, and the number of victims. If incidence was taken into account (i.e. by adding the theft incidents reported by respondents who were victimized more than once) the number of thefts in 2003 would reach 125,000 cases and the gap would be even wider.



Despite the fairly high level (44.8%) of non-reporting for this crime, the large gap between police and victim records can only be explained by the failure of the police to register reported incidents. It may reasonably be estimated that **between 50,000 and 60,000 such crimes per year do not pass the various police “filters” and thus go unrecorded.**

Whereas the comparison of prevalence rates for car theft in other countries show Bulgaria to be relatively low-risk, the prevalence rates of thefts *from* cars (see figure 11) show that this is a crime much more common in Eastern Europe, including Bulgaria.

FIGURE 11. THEFT FROM CARS: PERCENT OF OWNERS VICTIMIZED ONCE OR MORE²¹ (ICVS, 2000)



2.2.3 Motorcycle Theft

Due to the small size of the 2004 victimization survey sample, the number of motorcycle thefts turned out low and thus impervious to analysis. This is why they are not discussed in this report.

2.2.4 Bicycle Theft

In Bulgaria's victimization surveys for, both, 2002 and 2004 around 30% of respondents stated their household had owned at least one bicycle in the last five years. In 2001 3.5% of bicycle owners were victims of bicycle theft, while in 2003 the share was slightly lower – 3.4%. This rate is lower than the average level in the seventeen ICVS countries – 4.7%. The difference with other countries is the perception of the seriousness of this category of crime. The majority of victims in Bulgaria (55.6%) defined this incident as fairly serious, 17.9% of them as very serious, and only 14% as a minor incident. This set of data diverges from the ICVS data, in which the majority of respondents (48%) claimed bicycle theft was a minor incident, 15% claimed it was very serious, and 37% defined it as a fairly serious crime. One possible reason is that bicycles in Bulgaria are much more expensive relative to the average wages than in the other surveyed countries where incomes are much higher.

2.2.5 Burglary

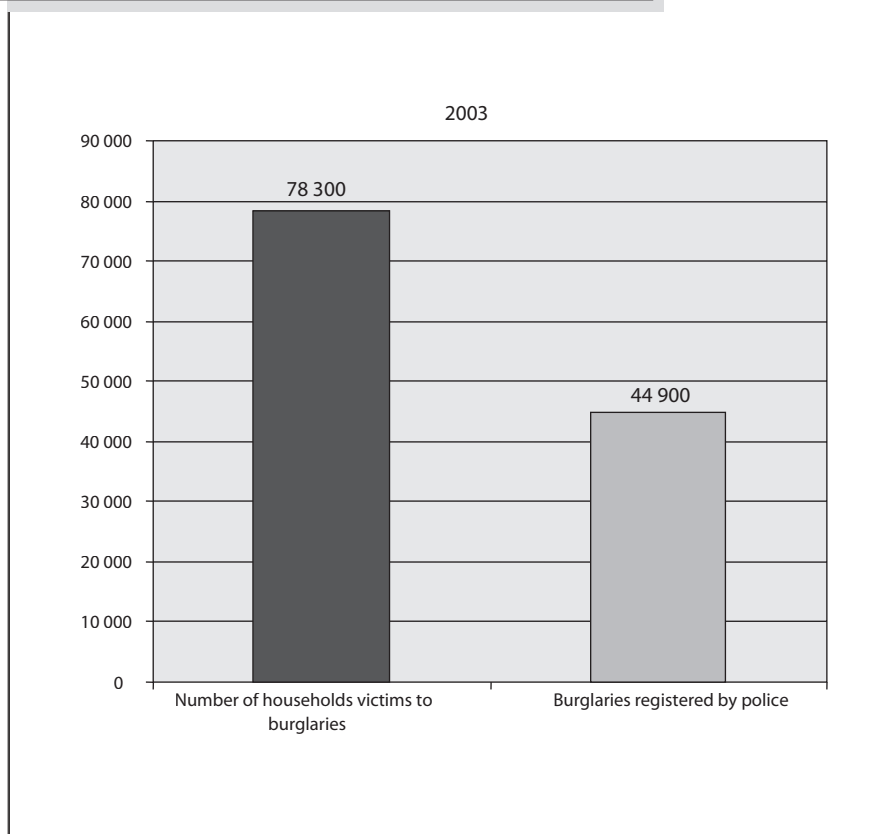
Burglary is among the most widespread crimes in Bulgaria because in contrast to car theft²² it can affect any one individual. As with car theft data, comparison again shows a discrepancy between police records and victimization surveys (see Figure 12). The latency level for burglary is sufficiently high to account for the differences, even if police records are juxtaposed to the **total number**

²¹ Source: ICVS, 2002

²² Around 45 % of households are affected.

of burglaries according to the 2003 victimization survey which are between 100,000 and 105,000. The share of respondents stating they had reported the incident to the police was 54%, while 34% of the victims had not reported, and 12% did not answer.

FIGURE 12. BURGLARIES

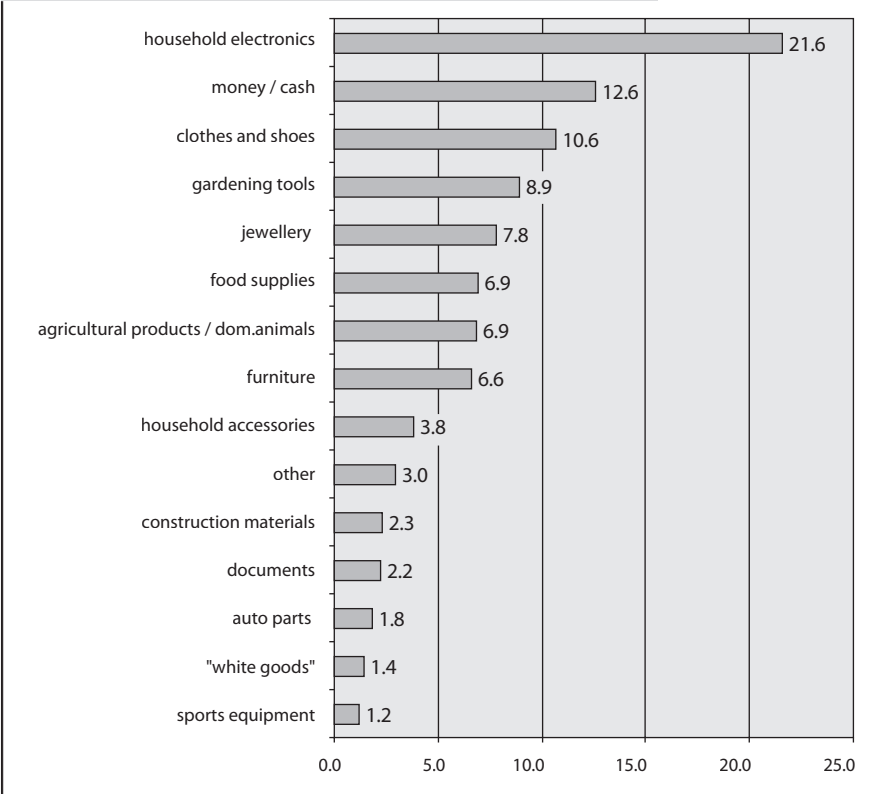


There is additional evidence about the damages inflicted by burglaries that can be drawn from victimization surveys. The average cost of stolen property was calculated at €457 (where the median²³ is €150), whereas that of damaged property was €67 (the median being €50). If an estimate of the yearly total cost of stolen property is to be done for year 2003, it will amount to **between €15 and €47.8 million**. (depending on whether the average or the median cost is accepted as the more credible indicator). Damaged property costs will then range between €5 and €15 million. The type possessions most frequently stolen by burglars are household electronics, cash and clothes (see figure 13).

The percentage of Bulgarians victimized was 2.9% in 2001 and 3.1% in 2003, which is higher than the burglary victimization levels in the other countries analyzed by the ICVS working group (see figure 14).

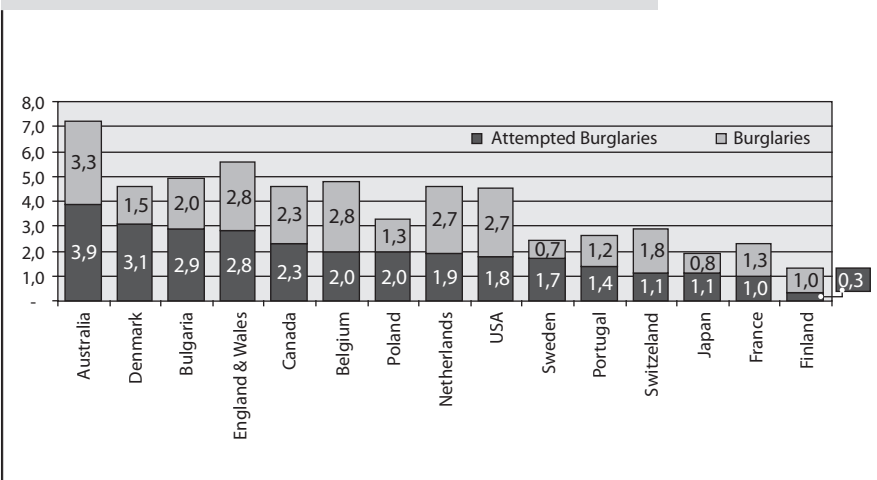
²³ The middle value in an ordered set of values.

FIGURE 13. STOLEN PRIVATE POSSESSIONS: % OF VICTIMS (2004)



Comparisons may be drawn for attempted burglary as well. The large share of attempted burglary suggests that homes are well protected by security devices (and burglars fail to gain entry).²⁵ Bulgaria has a high prevalence rate for attempted burglaries and this is logical considering that 75% of the households surveyed in 2002 had taken some kind of home-security measures. The share fell in 2004, when only 69% of the respondents answered that they had taken security measures.

FIGURE 14. BURGLARIES AND ATTEMPTED BURGLARIES: PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS VICTIMIZED ONCE OR MORE²⁴ (ICVS, 2000)

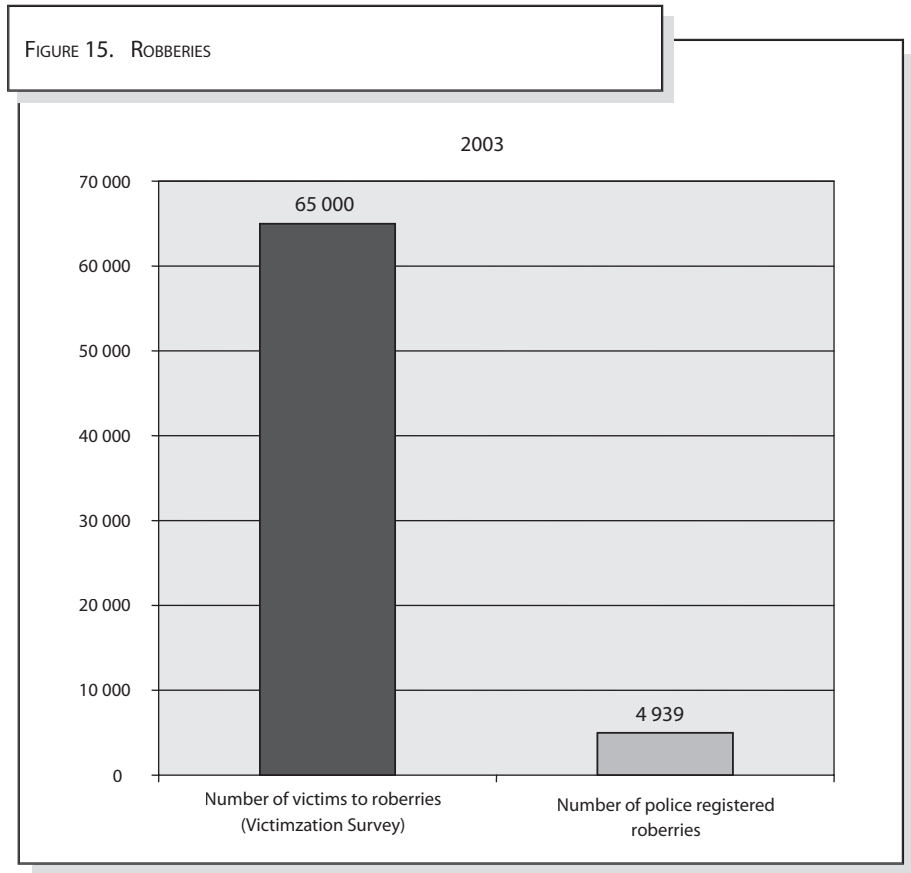


²⁴ Source: ICVS

²⁵ Van Kesteren, J.N., Mayhew, P. & Nieuwebeerta, P. (2000) 'Criminal Victimization in Seventeen Industrialised Countries: Key-findings from the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey'. The Hague, Ministry of Justice, WODC., p. 31

2.2.6 Robbery

Robbery is the crime for which the gap between police records and victimization survey findings is widest. The survey question was put as follows: „In the last five years have you been robbed of any property through use of force or threat? Has anyone attempted to rob you?“ The survey data indicates that annually 45,000 to 65,000 people become robbery victims. According to police records for the period 1998-2004, however, the annual number varied between 4,000 to 5,000 robberies per year. (see figure 15)



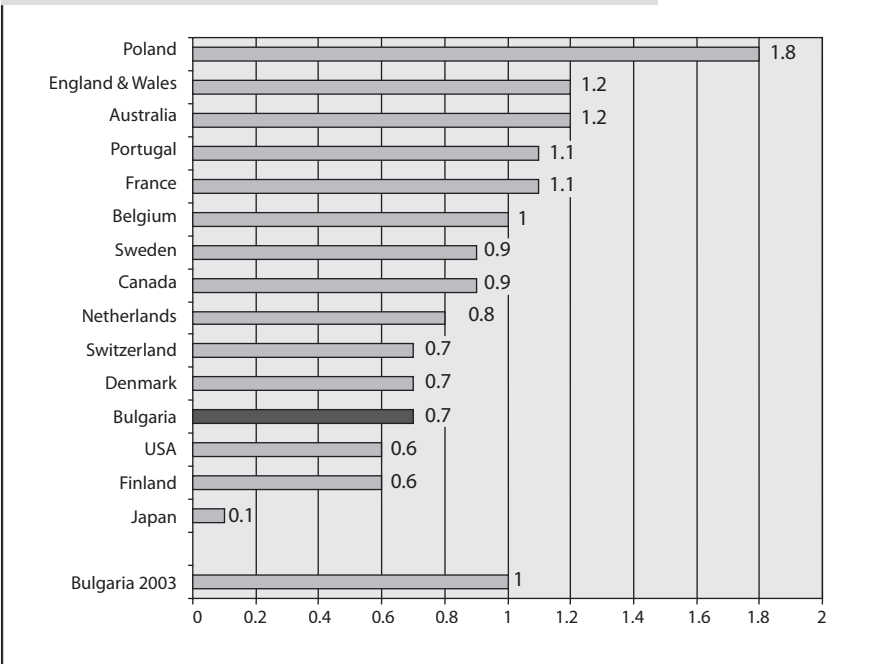
One reason for the small number of police-recorded robberies is again the high latency level—the proportion of victims reporting to the police in 2003 was only 33%. Such striking disparities are somewhat disturbing, in view of the fact that threat or violence during robberies are very common and this feature warrants special police attention. In their unwillingness to deal with such serious crime, police officers record only a small proportion of all robberies. **The police use a range of “filtering strategies” from dissuading victims from reporting a crime to recording an incident but not making an official entry in the police records.** With robberies the police employ one more strategy—registering the case as a minor incident when the value

of the stolen property is low or there was no violence during the incident. Thus, 18% of robberies are recorded as minor incidents.

In comparison to other countries, in 2001 Bulgaria had relatively low robbery prevalence rates. In 2003 the number of victimized respondents went up (see figure 16).²⁶

²⁶ It is worth noting that this increase also figures in polices records: in 2001 the number of robbery victims was 4072, whereas in 2003 it rose to 4939.

FIGURE 16. ROBBERY: % VICTIMIZED ONCE OR MORE (ICVS, 2000)



2.2.7 Theft of Personal Property and Pickpocketing

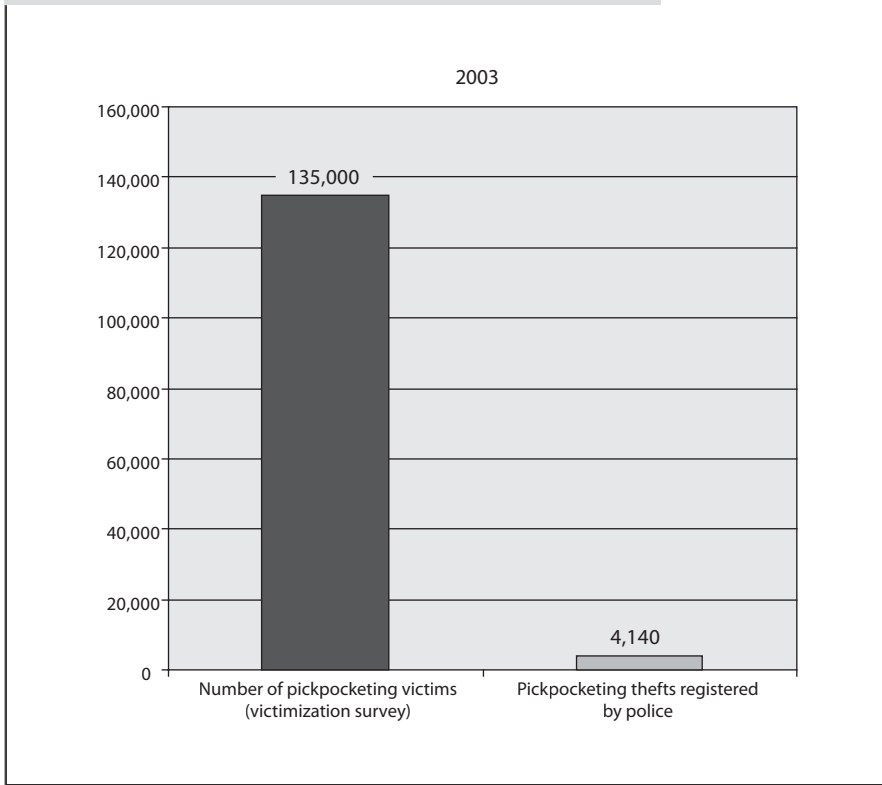
In order to capture thefts different from burglary, questions about all other types of theft outside the home were asked—such as thefts of personal property in restaurants, at the beach, in public transport, or in the street. The share of respondents who were victims of such thefts in 2003 was 3.1%. This group of crimes is quite heterogeneous, so for the sake of comparison pickpocketing was singled out. Pickpocketing was defined as the incidents where the victim was carrying the stolen possessions, e.g. items such as wallets, handbags, jewelry, etc.

Pickpocketing is typically characterized by the highest rate of unreported crimes. The victimization survey found that in 2003 135,000 people had been victims of pickpocketing (see figure 17). The number of incidents for the same year was even higher—around 200,000.

The high latency can only partially account for the discrepancy between actual incidents and pickpocketing cases from police records. Since 27% of the respondents sought help from the police, it may be concluded that the number of reported pickpocketing incidents should have been about 50,000. Instead the police registered only 4,140 incidents.

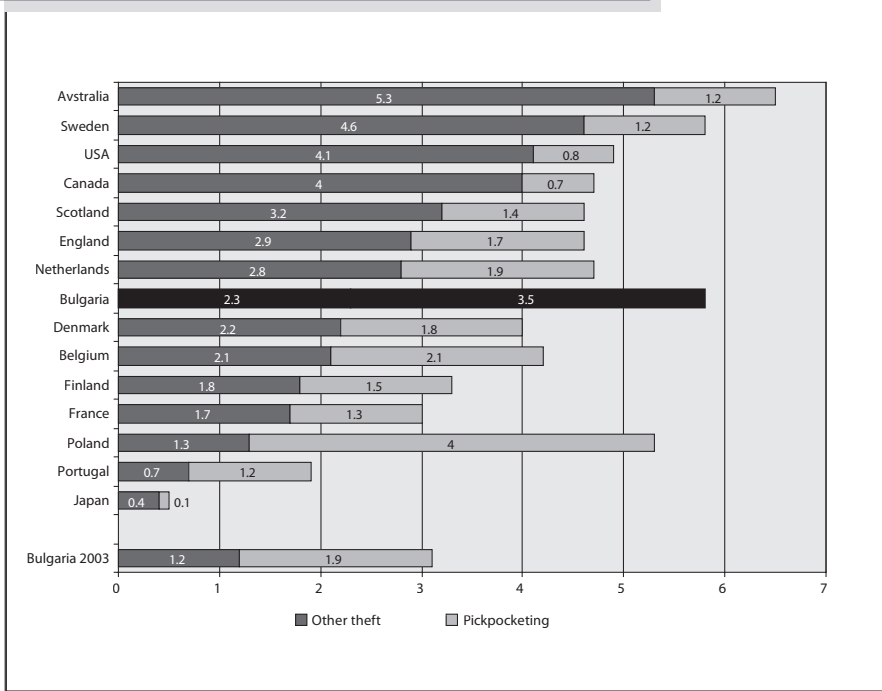
It is difficult to compare personal property theft across countries since they are quite diverse. The highest risks of personal theft in the seventeen survey countries were in Australia (6.5%), Sweden (5.8%), and Poland (5.3%), while Japan (0.5%) and Portugal (1.9%) were the countries of lowest risk. Bulgaria is positioned somewhere towards the middle of the table.

FIGURE 17. PICKPOCKET CRIME



When taking pickpocketing separately, in 2001 Bulgaria ranked second with 3.5% of respondents being victimized, surpassed only by Poland with 4%. Over the period 2001-2003, however, there was a noticeable drop in the number of victims which reached a low of 1.9% in 2003. Part of the explanations is that the major organized groups of pickpocketers had left Bulgaria, following the establishment of visa-free regime with most European countries.²⁷

FIGURE 18. THEFT OF PERSONAL GOODS AND PICKPOCKETING THEFTS: PERCENTAGE OF VICTIMIZED RESPONDENTS (ICVS, 2000)



²⁷ Interview with a Mol official, 18 January 2005, Sofia.

2.2.8 *Sexual Offences*

Every year several thousand women in Bulgaria become victims to a range of sexual crimes—from minor sexual assaults (not counting sexual harassment) to rapes. Due to the sensitivity of the issue and the unwillingness of most women to discuss such experiences, the sample size of the victimization surveys has proved to be too small to make valid comparisons with the police statistics. For the same reason, it is hard to estimate the number of female victims of rape or molestation with use of violence (although both surveys capture respondents-victims to such crimes). Only female respondents (827 women in 2002 and 529 in 2003) were asked questions about sexual offences. The question used in the ICVS is formulated so as to include the widest possible spectrum of sexually motivated crimes.²⁸

Taking into account the possible statistical error, between 12,000 and 51,000 women have been sexually assaulted in some way over a period of five years (2000–2004), which means between 2,000 and 10,000 per year. Additional questions were asked to clarify how serious the offence was, the exact year in which it happened and whether the offender was a stranger or someone the respondent knew. Regrettably, the very limited number of respondents does not permit to draw any conclusions from the results. Sexual crimes are a very sensitive topic (which shows in the high number of “Don’t know” answers) and Bulgarians traditionally have a less open attitude to it. Given also the problems of recalling minor incidents, it may be concluded that the likely number of victims is much greater.

The annual number of sexual offences (rape, attempted rape and molestation), recorded by the police is between 900 and 1,000. Both victimization surveys identify a rather low reporting rate among victimized women: 11.4% in year 2002 and 0 in 2004. This leads one to believe that the higher figure of 10,000 offences per year is more plausible (since the share of reported and recorded crimes is 10% or around 1,000).

²⁸ “First, a rather personal question. People sometimes grab, touch or assault others for sexual reasons in a really offensive way. This can happen either at home, or elsewhere, for instance in a pub, the street, at school, on public transport, in cinemas, on the beach, or at one’s workplace. Over the past five years, has anyone done this to you? Please take your time to think about this.”

3 VICTIMS OF CRIME: RISK PROFILE

Victimization surveys, compared to data gathered by the police, are more useful in coming up with a more detailed risk profile of the victim. “Prevalence” (Table 3) and “odds-ratio” (Table 4) are two indicators that measure the risk of becoming a victim of crime.

3.1 Prevalence

Table 3 shows the relative share of respondents who have indicated that they have fallen victims of a specific crime. This indicator helps distinguish the following risks:²⁹

- **Residence location factors.** Those in more urban localities are assumed to live nearer to groups of high offending frequency. In these areas, public vigilance is low while the anonymity of the setting is higher. The differences in risk are considerable for car thefts, of which urban dwellers become victims almost twice as often as small town residents. However, with thefts *from* cars the latter are more often victimized. Big city dwellers are also more likely to become victims of property crimes, especially burglary, bicycle and motorcycle theft.
- **Income.** People with higher incomes are more likely to become victims not only of property crimes, such as burglary and attempted burglary, but also of robbery.
- **Risky lifestyle and family status.** Those who go out at night more often and those who are single are more likely victims of threat, assault, burglary, attempted burglary and car theft. It is interesting that both groups are at lower risk of thefts *from* cars.
- **Age.** Middle-aged respondents (25 to 54 years old) become more often victims of car thefts and thefts from cars. Younger people (up to 24 years old) are more likely victims of robbery and assault. Older people (more than 55 years old), who do not go out very often, are more rarely victims of burglaries and attempts of burglary.
- **Education:** Those with higher level of educational are more vulnerable to a number of property crimes.

²⁹ Van Kesteren, J.N., Mayhew, P. & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2000) ‘Criminal Victimization in Seventeen Industrialised Countries: Key-findings from the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey’. The Hague, Ministry of Justice, WODC., стр. 53

- **Ethnicity:**³⁰ In contrast with the international survey conducted by the UNODC, this survey included ethnicity as a risk factor (Bulgarian, Roma, and Turkish). The hypothesis was that each one of the ethnic groups has different socio-economic characteristics, which make different group members more likely victims of different crimes. Bulgarians are more likely victims of property crimes, while Turks and especially Roma are more vulnerable as far as contact crimes (such as robbery and assault) are concerned.
- **Gender:** In almost all crimes, males are more likely targets than females.

TABLE 3. PREVALENCE (2003)

		Theft of car	Theft from car	Car vandalism	Bicycle theft	Burglary	Attempted burglary	Robbery	Sexual incidents	Assault/Threat
Town size	City (regional capitals & Sofia)	3.1	5.7	2.4	3.7	3.1	1.4	3.3	0.2	1.8
	Small town/village	1.7	7.3	3.5	2.1	0.7	0.5	2.6	0.0	1.4
Income	High income	3.0	7.9	3.2	2.4	2.7	0.3	2.5	0.3	1.5
	Low income	3.3	6.9	2.2	4.1	2.5	2.0	5.2	0.0	1.2
Going out	Goes out often	2.8	5.1	3.7	2.0	2.2	1.3	3.0	0.0	2.2
	Goes out rarely	2.4	7.5	2.0	3.5	1.9	0.8	2.9	0.1	1.3
Married	Married	1.8	7.8	3.2	3.2	1.4	0.5	2.9	0.1	1.1
	Not Married	4.2	3.4	2.1	2.6	2.8	1.6	3.1	0.0	2.1
Age	Up to 24	1.6	3.8	3.8	0.8	2.3	1.8	4.3	0.0	4.3
	25-54	3.5	7.8	2.8	2.7	2.3	0.8	2.3	0.2	0.6
	55 +	0.7	4.9	2.2	4.2	1.3	0.8	3.3	0.0	1.7
Education	Low	2.7	5.1	2.4	2.6	2.2	1.0	2.9	0.1	1.8
	High	2.0	10.1	4.2	4.4	1.0	1.1	3.3	0.0	0.8
Sex	Male	3.1	6.8	2.6	2.5	2.2	1.2	3.8	0.0	1.8
	Female	1.8	5.9	3.2	3.3	1.7	0.8	2.2	0.2	1.4
Ethnicity	Bulgarian	2.8	3.2	1.5	3.0	2.2	1.1	2.9	0.1	1.7
	Turkish	0.0	1.2	0.0	3.8	1.7	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.5
	Roma	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.0	0.0	3.8

3.2 Odds-ratio

Table 4 compares the odds of someone from a certain social group becoming a victim of a specific type of crime. The “base” (reference group) is the one at lowest risk. If the coefficient of a particular group is higher than 1, the risk of victimization of this group is higher than the base group and vice versa.

³⁰ The question asked is „Which ethnic group do you belong to?” The options taken into consideration are Bulgarian, Turkish, Bulgarian-Muslim, Roma (Gypsy), other.

For instance, when the risk of car thefts is compared across localities, it turns out that the risk coefficient for city residents is 1.91 (Table 4, row 1, column 3) which is 91% higher than the risk for the base group (small town or village). This indicates that urban dwellers are 1.91 times as likely to become victims of car thefts. However, for thefts *from* cars, the coefficient for this group is smaller—0.77. It is smaller than the base coefficient and this shows that city residents are at lower odds of becoming victims of thefts from cars.³¹

This method makes it possible to distinguish the risk of crimes not only for a particular social group but also to find the risk factors for victims in an individual crime category. Thus, the defining risk factor for victims of burglaries is city residence (4.65). However, the defining risk factor for attempted burglary is high income (8.29). A possible reason why wealthier people are more likely victims of burglary attempts rather than burglaries is that they take more precautions in securing their homes.

TABLE 4. ODDS RATIO (2003)

		Theft of car	Theft from car	Car vandalism	Bicycle theft	Burglary	Attempted burglary	Robbery	Assault/Threat
Town size	Regional capitals & Sofia	1.91	0.77	0.69	1.85	4.65	2.87	1.28	1.29
	Small town/village (base)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Income	High income	1.11	0.87	0.69	1.74	0.92	8.29	2.11	0.82
	Low income (base)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Going out	Goes out often	1.19	0.67	1.9	0.55	1.19	1.63	1.02	1.66
	Goes out rarely (base)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Married	Married	0.41	2.44	1.52	1.2	0.5	0.32	0.92	0.52
	Not Married (base)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Age	Up to 24	2.45	0.76	1.72	0.18	1.88	2.27	1.31	2.59
	25-54	5.44	1.65	1.28	0.64	1.86	1	0.67	0.37
	55 + (base)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Education	Low	0.75	2.07	1.81	1.73	0.45	1.15	1.15	0.47
	High (base)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Sex	Male	1.68	1.17	0.8	0.73	1.26	1.55	1.71	1.24
	Female (base)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Ethnicity ³²	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

³¹ The coefficients are calculated using the methodology of Van Kesteren et al. (2000). The odds of someone from a specific social group (living in a city) of becoming (3.1 – see table 1) or not becoming (100-3.1) a victim of crime is measured. This figure is divided by the odds of someone from a different group (living in a smaller town/village) becoming (1.7 –table 1) or not becoming (100-1.7) a victim of crime.

³² Ethnicity-related data should be interpreted tentatively because of the small number and relative share of Turks and Roma in the sample. For certain crimes such as robbery, only one Roma respondent claimed he had been victimized in the last five years. This is why the chance for statistical bias is high and the results are not statistically robust.

4 REPORTING CRIME

The frequency of not reporting crime (rate of latency) is an important criterion for the level of confidence that citizens have in the police. International victimization surveys show that the average frequency of not reporting crime in Bulgaria is at the level of the seventeen countries analyzed by the ICVS working group. At the same time, four types of crime, as mentioned before, are more typical for Bulgaria – burglaries, thefts from cars, robberies and thefts of personal property - the frequency of not reporting those is considerably higher than the average frequency in the seventeen ICVS countries (see Table 5).

TABLE 5. PERCENT OF CRIMES REPORTED TO THE POLICE

Type of crime	Average for 17 countries (ICVS, 2000)	Bulgaria	Bulgaria
	1999	2002	2004
Theft of car	91%	89%	81%
Motorcycle theft	79%	86%	100%
Burglary with entry	78%	58%	54%
Theft from car	62%	42%	45%
Bicycle theft	56%	36%	46%
Robbery	55%	54%	32%
Assaults with force	45%	58%	44%
Theft of personal property	42%	22%	27%
Car vandalism	41%	33%	26%
Attempted burglary	40%	40%	38%
Threats	29%	31%	27%
Sexual assaults ³³	28%	--	--
Offensive sexual behavior	10%	--	--
Average	50%	50%	47%

³³ The calculated average values omit figures for sexual offences because of the insignificant number of cases which produce a big statistical bias.

According to victimization questions in the UNDP Early Warning project for the period 1997-2002, the frequency of not reporting crimes has been increasing slowly. In 1997, 35% of respondents had not reported victimization to the police. In 2002 this figure reached 45%.

4.1 Reasons for Not Reporting Various Types of Crime

Latency rates vary with the type of crime. That is why the reasons for not reporting to the police need to be analyzed by groups of crimes. Three types of crimes are considered below – thefts from cars, burglaries and robberies.

Thefts from cars

Figure 19 shows the reasons for not reporting crimes to the police. Two of the most important reasons relate to the belief of the respondents that the police are not going to do anything. A possible explanation is that compared to car thefts very few of the victims are insured against thefts from cars.

At the same time, the answers to the question „How serious was the crime for your family?“ indicate a strong correlation between the value of the stolen property and the likelihood of seeking assistance from the police. Data shows that 85% of the victims who think that the crime is serious, turned to the police (see Table 6).

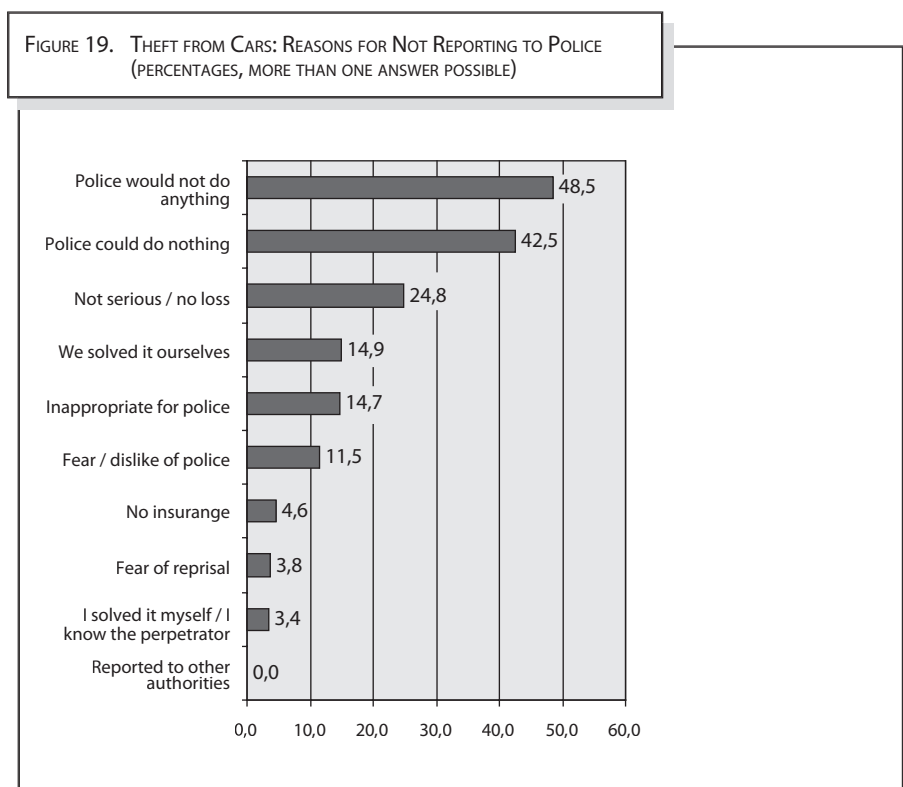


TABLE 6. THEFT FROM CAR: SERIOUSNESS OF CRIME AND REPORTING TO POLICE

	Reported to police	Not reported to police
Very serious	85%	15%
Not very serious	54%	43%
Not serious	27%	61%

* The respondents that either did not or refused to answer were subtracted from the 100% for the respective groups.

The study distinguished one group of 11.5% of the respondents, who not only distrust, but also have a strong negative attitude towards the police. In the UNODC study of 17 countries the highest number was for Northern Ireland – 5%.

Burglaries

The order of importance of the reasons for not reporting burglaries is similar to that of thefts from cars – the two main reasons reflect doubt in police competence (see Figure 20). However, here again the main motive which respondents are reluctant to admit is the value of the stolen property (see Table 7).

FIGURE 20. BURGLARIES: REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING TO POLICE (PERCENTAGES, MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE)

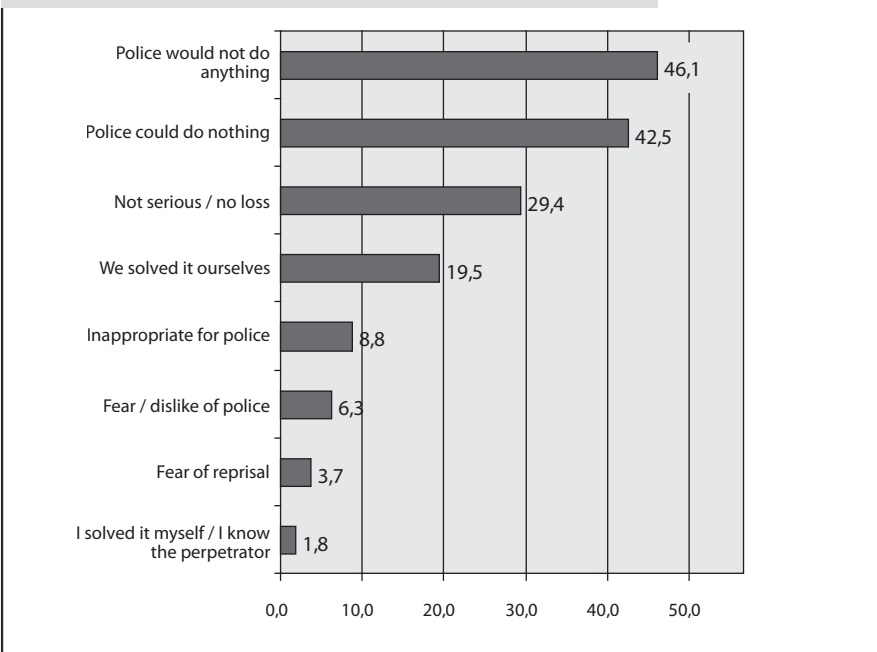


TABLE 7. BURGLARIES: SERIOUSNESS OF CRIME AND REPORTING TO POLICE

	Reported to police	Not reported to police
Very serious	89.7%	10.3%
Not very serious	50%	44.4%
Not serious	25%	70.8%

* The respondents that either did not or refused to answer were subtracted from the 100% for the respective groups.

Robberies

High latency rates for robberies is the case in most countries, not just in Bulgaria (as can be seen from international comparisons). In contrast to thefts from cars and burglaries, even when crimes are serious, victims of robberies prefer not to seek assistance from the police (see Table 8). Similar to thefts, here respondents also share distrust in the abilities of the police, which in this case is even stronger. That the third reason for not reporting this crime is fear of reprisal.

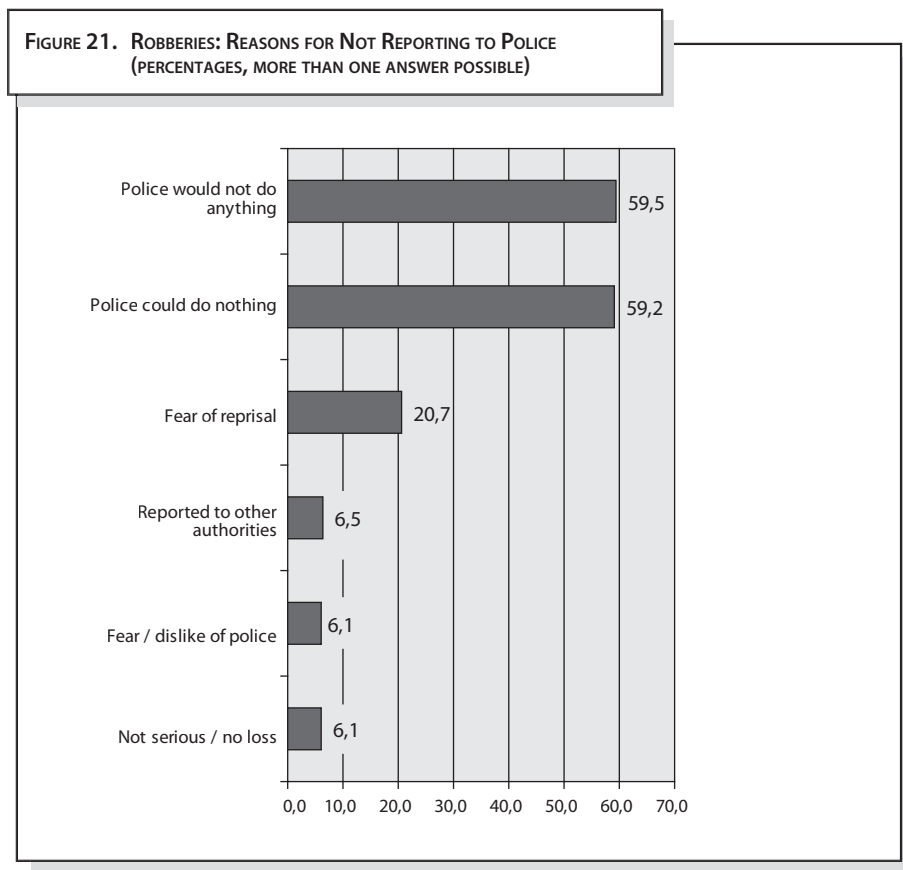


TABLE 8 ROBBERIES: SERIOUSNESS OF CRIME AND REPORTING TO POLICE

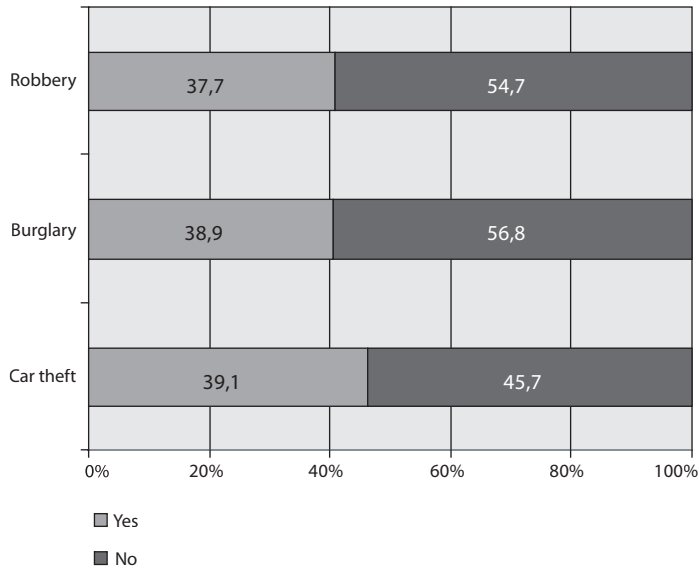
	Reported to police	Not reported to police
Very serious	60%	40%
Not very serious	33.6%	67.6%
Not serious	20%	60%

* The respondents that either did not or refused to answer were subtracted from the 100% for the respective groups.

4.2 Attitudes towards the Police

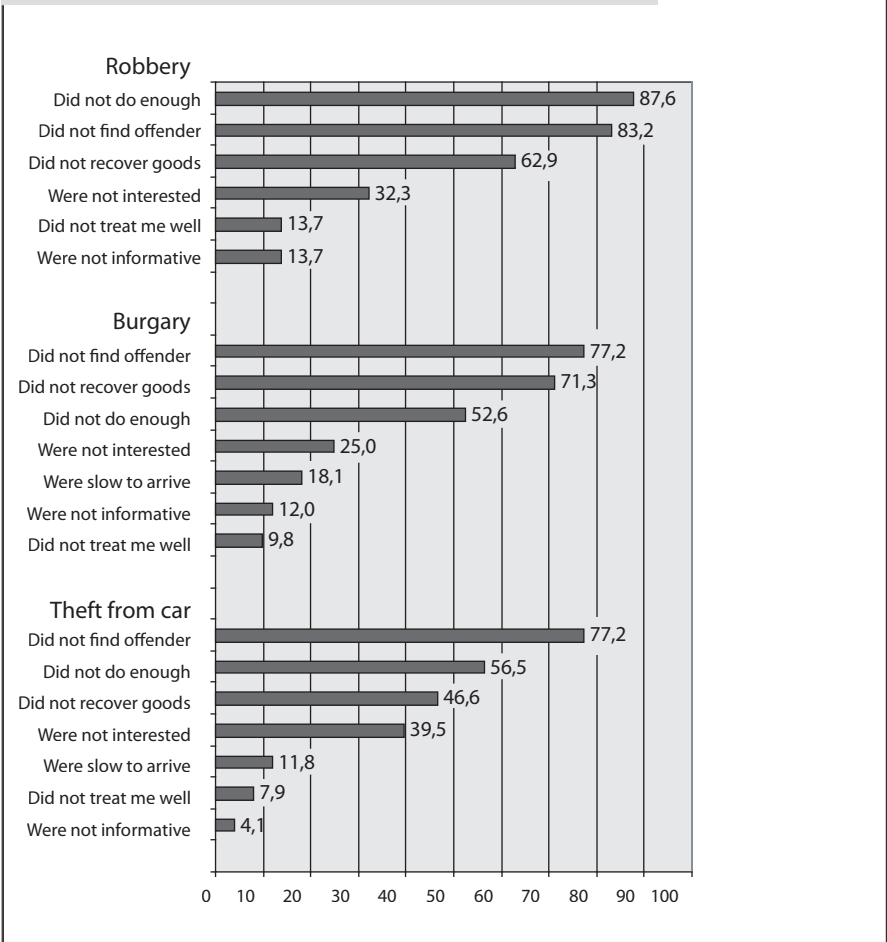
In addition to their readiness to report crime, which indirectly evaluates the work of the police, the victims of crime were asked to assess police actions after they were approached. As appears from the data below, the dissatisfaction predominates ranging between 46 % and 57% depending on the crime.

FIGURE 22. PERCENTAGE SATISFIED WITH POLICE RESPONSE AFTER REPORTING A CRIME



The reasons for the high percentage of dissatisfaction differ in the three groups of crimes. A dominant reason for the negative rating is “criminal not being apprehended” (see Figure 23). Other reasons include the inadequate actions of the police and unrecovered property.

FIGURE 23. REASONS FOR NOT BEING SATISFIED WITH THE POLICE



5 FACTORS OF CHANGE IN BULGARIA'S CRIME RATE

The decrease in crime has been recorded by both the police statistics and the victimization surveys. There are various reasons for this change and no one factor is defining. The major factors include demographic and socio-economic changes as well as the actions of the police and the judiciary.

5.1 Demographic and Socio-Economic Reasons

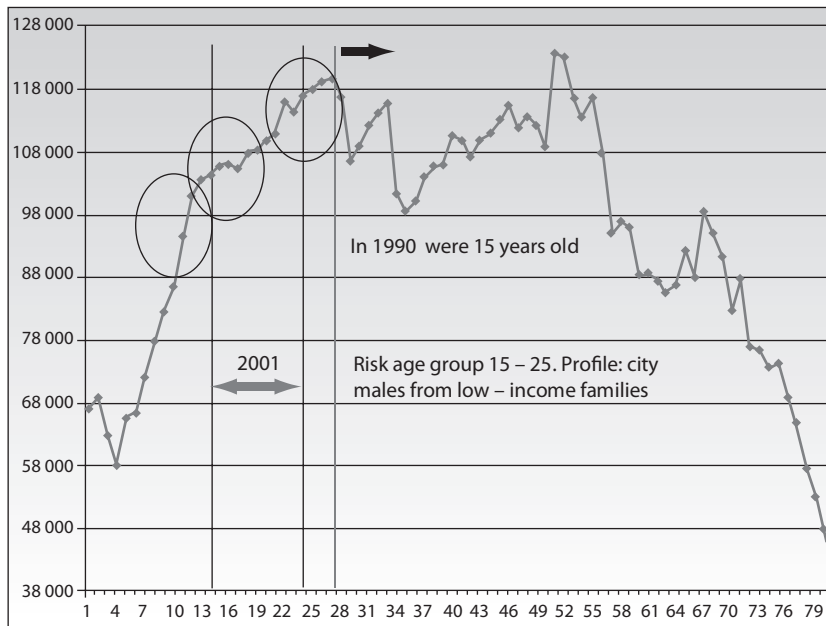
Demographic factors

Demographic limitations could serve as a starting point to analyze the decrease in crime in the country. According to a variety of crime studies, most of the people who commit crimes belong to the 15-25 age group.³⁴ Data about Bulgaria are not available, yet in the West European countries and the US, 50% to 70% of arrested individuals are in this age group. According to Bulgarian police data nearly 15% of all crimes are committed by minors. The analysis of the demographic situation in Bulgaria shows that after 1998 the population in the 15-25 age group has been declining. In next 7 years this trend will continue (see Figure 24) even more markedly. The reason is that between 1990 and 1997 a record low birth-rate was registered, comparable only to the periods of the two world wars. Thus, the weakening demographic pressure will result in fewer children entering the risk groups of the minor criminals aged 10-15 as well as the 15-25 risk age group.

Figure 24 presents the 2001 census results. The line designates the size of the same-age cohorts. Their ages at the time of the 2001 census is marked on the x-axis. Thus, those born in 2001 are one-year old; those born in 2000 are two, etc. The y-axis shows the number of people born in the respective year. 1997, which was a critical year for Bulgarian society, marked a record low number of births—about 58,000, and they appear on this figure as four-year-olds.

³⁴ See Neal Shover and Carol Y. Thompson, "Age, Differential Expectations, and Crime Desistance," *Criminology* 30 (February 1992); Neal Shover, *Aging Criminals* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1985), Scott Menard, "Demographic and Theoretical Variables in the Age-Period-Cohort Analysis of Illegal Behavior," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 29 (May 1992), Darrell Steffensmeier and Miles D. Harer, "Did Crime Rise or Fall During the Reagan Presidency? The Effects of an 'Aging' U.S. Population on the Nation's Crime Rate," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 28 (August 1991).

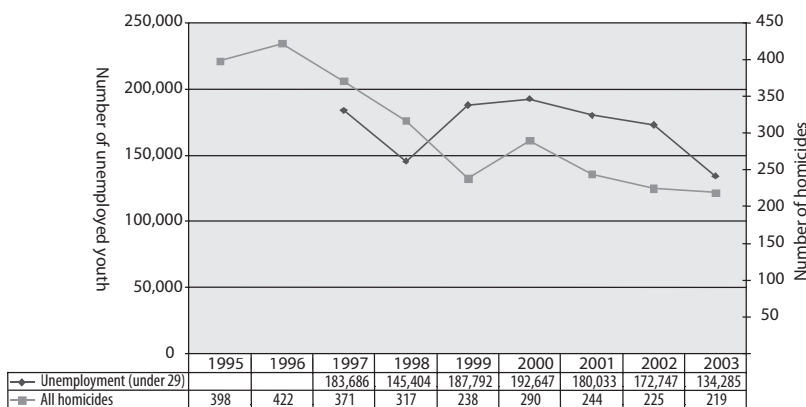
FIGURE 24. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF BULGARIA'S POPULATION (2001)



Decrease in unemployment

A second factor that influences the decrease in crime is the socio-economic stabilization of the country. Following a series of economic crises in 1997 all major macroeconomic indicators, reflecting the population's standard of living, began to improve. A good illustration of the impact of the macroeconomic factors on crime in Bulgaria is unemployment. Data of the 1997-2004 period confirm the results of various international studies showing the link between unemployment and crime.³⁵ An interesting illustration of this link is the correlation between homicides and the number of unemployed young males.³⁶ Figure 25 shows that the peak of unemployment in 2000 coincides with the peak of committed homicides.

FIGURE 25. UNEMPLOYMENT AND HOMICIDES



young males.³⁶ Figure 25 shows that the peak of unemployment in 2000 coincides with the peak of committed homicides.

³⁵ See for example: Raphael, 2001.

³⁶ National Employment Agency (<http://www.nsz.government.bg/>).

Emigration and the “export” of criminals

Another factor that contributes to the decrease in crime after 2001 (the year when the visa restrictions for the Shengen countries were abolished) is the increased emigrant flow, which includes a great number of criminals as well as males from the below-30 risk group.

Although there is no available detailed information about Bulgarians arrested in EU countries, data from several of them point to the overall trend in crime “export”. A report of the Dutch police says that the lifting of visas for Bulgarian nationals on 1 April 2001 led to an increase of crime suspects and the “stream of criminals and illegal prostitutes from Bulgaria led to government intervention in November 2003.”³⁷ The report also states that in 2002 the Dutch police cleared up 740 crimes, committed by Bulgarian nationals.³⁸

TABLE 9. CRIMES BY BULGARIAN CITIZENS IN THE NETHERLANDS³⁹

Indecency with violence	violence	robbery	theft	vandalism	trafficking	narcotics	other	Total
7	37	11	549	35	59	19	23	740

According to data of the Spanish Police, 521 crimes committed by Bulgarian nationals were uncovered between January and September 2004.⁴⁰ Keeping in mind that the above-quoted crimes are only the crimes that had been uncovered, and that most crime “exports” are to Austria, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries, most likely, there are several thousand crimes committed by Bulgarians in other European countries. For example, the significant decrease of pickpocketing thefts in Bulgaria after 2001 is certainly attributable to the fact many pickpocketers now “work” in Western Europe.

5.2 Ministry of Interior and Judicial Bodies: Counteraction of Crime

The decrease of crime rates is due not only to social, economic and demographic reasons but also to the work of the respective judicial branches and the Ministry of Interior. It is difficult to assess precisely the contribution of single actions or initiatives for achieving particular results. The increased number of detainees is one of the indicators that points at the greater activity of the police, having at least a deterrence effect on potential criminals. Often even increased police presence in the streets brings about a fall in crime.

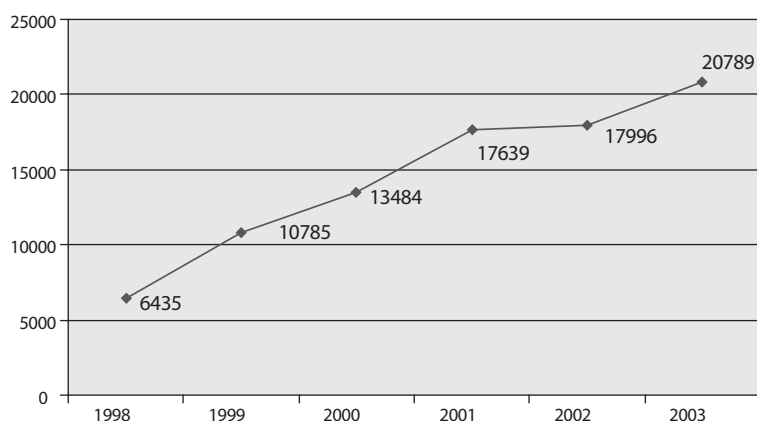
³⁷ National Police Agency / National Crime Squad, Unit North and East Netherlands, Department Eastern Europe / Intelligence, “Crime without frontiers: Crime Pattern Analysis Easter Europe 2002 – 2003”. , September 2004, p. 130.

³⁸ In the same year, 2002, the Ministry of Interior registered 3,543 crimes less in Bulgaria compared to 2001.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 136.

⁴⁰ Interview with a Spanish government official, 18 January 2005.

**FIGURE 26. DETENTIONS
(ACCORDING TO ART. 70 OF THE LAW ON THE MOL)**



Because of the lack of uniform statistics on criminal trials⁴¹ (including those for the crimes considered in the present publication) the role of the judiciary in the decrease of crime rates in the period 2001–2004 is hard to evaluate. In addition, there are no efficient mechanisms for information exchange both among the separate bodies of the judiciary and between them and the other competent authorities involved in combating crime. Therefore, it is impossible to trace the relation between the number of sentenced persons or punished crimes⁴² on one hand, and the number of reported crimes, on the other hand.⁴³ The number of sentenced persons and punished crimes has increased slightly in the period 1998–2003. Certainly, the results of the active police efforts cannot have an immediate effect on the work of the judiciary due to the time lag between the detention of a criminal, the investigation, and the termination of the case.

An indicator for the more efficient work of the Mol and the judiciary are the fast-track police investigation and trials. Only some types of crimes, uncovered under specific circumstances, could be prosecuted in this manner. All police and judicial procedures for them have to be completed in less than one month. After its introduction in 2001, this approach has been actively applied. The numbers of fast-track police investigations increased from 2,163 in 2000 to 2,933 in 2002 to 5,519 in 2003, to 7,861 in 2004.⁴⁴

Another criterion for the Ministry of Interior and the judiciary's efficiency is the increasing number of crime suspects in the period 1999–2003.

⁴¹ Different authorities (the Ministry of Interior, the National Investigation Service, the Supreme Prosecution Office of Cassation and the Ministry of Justice) maintain separate statistics, classified according different indicators, which makes impossible the comparative analysis of the data received.

⁴² "Punished crimes" means criminal trials, closed with a sentence.

⁴³ Statistical analysis points out that the linear correlation between them is -0.34.

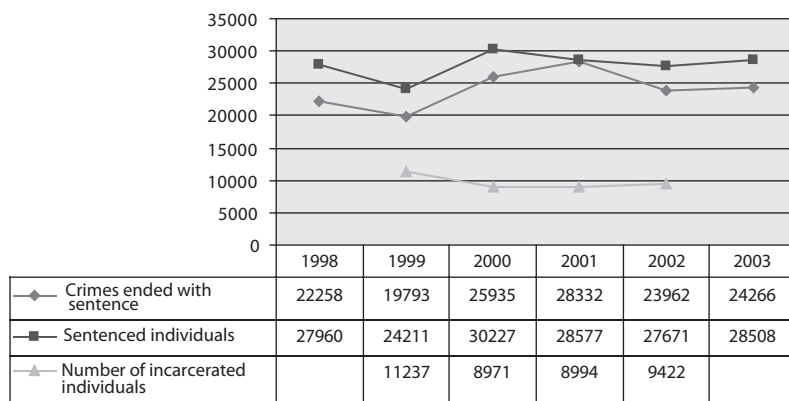
⁴⁴ Source: Ministry of Interior communication with CSD.

TABLE 10. CRIME SUSPECTS UNDER INVESTIGATION

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total	61,046	68,482	66,039	73,482	70,643
Homicides	484	486	453	407	521
Aggravated Assault	325	108	88	98	94
Rape / Sexual Assault	1,022	1,130	1,178	1,064	1,120
Larceny	25,091	34,531	32,025	35,059	32,130
Pickpocketing	776	936	1,043	1,015	1,202
Burglaries	6,381	12,313	10,939	11,230	9,681
Robbery	2,067	2,358	2,453	2,738	2,971
Automobile thefts	889	1,295	1,081	1,256	1,056

The number of sentenced and accused persons could also serve as an indicator for the efficiency of the judiciary. Although their numbers dropped during the period 1998-2003, after 2001, a turn in the trend and a gradual move towards the 1998 levels could be observed. If the data for 2003 and 2004 show a continuation of that trend, one can affirm that the judiciary has also contributed to the decrease of crime during the period 2001 –2004.

FIGURE 27. SENTENCES AND SENTENCED INDIVIDUALS



APPENDIX

Victimization survey questionnaire

The victimization survey questionnaire was modeled on the research tools used by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). The questionnaire identifies the crimes to which respondents and their households were victims in the last five years (2000 – 2004). It asks about eleven types of crimes (see table on next page).

Respondents are asked first about their experience with crime in the last five years. Those who mention an incident of any particular type are asked exactly when it occurred. Those who report incidents in the last year (2003), are asked how many times it occurred in 2003.

After determining the period of the incidents, a block of similarly structured questions follow for each particular offence: where the crime occurred, whether it was reported to the police, the reasons for reporting/not reporting the crime. Respondents are also asked how effective police action was and if they were satisfied with how the police solved the case.

All respondents are asked whether in 2003 they experienced consumer fraud and corruption. Some other crime-related questions are also included, for instance, what respondents would recommend as a sentence for a burglar, what are their attitudes towards the police and their perceptions of changes in street and organized crime.

Several new questions have been included to broaden the base of this particular survey:

- For the victims of contact crime, in particular assault/threat, robbery and sexual assault, respondents are asked about the ethnic group of the offender;
- Victims are asked how they reported the offence to the police: whether by dialing the emergency line 166, calling the local police station, etc.

Overview of Questions Asked in the Victimization Survey.⁴⁵

Victimization in last 5 years	When (last year)	How often (last year)	Where	Reported to the police?	Details of report a	Reported to others?	Victim support	Seriousness	Additional crime-specific questions
Household crimes									
Theft of car	•	•	•	•				•	•b
Theft from car	•	•	•	•	•			•	
Car vandalism	•	•	•	•				•	
Motorcycle / moped theft	•	•	•	•				•	
Bicycle theft	•	•	•	•				•	
Burglary	•		•	•	•		•	•	•c
Attempted burglary	•		•	•				•	
Personal crimes									
Robbery	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•d
Theft of personal property	•	•	•	•				•	•e
Sexual incidents	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•f
Assaults / threats									
+ second screener	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•f

⁴⁵ Van Kesteren, J.N., Mayhew, P. & Nieuwbeerta, P. (2000) 'Criminal Victimization in Seventeen Industrialised Countries: Key-findings from the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey'. The Hague, Ministry of Justice, WODC., стр. 16

- a** Details of reports to the police are: why did you report; why did you not report; were you satisfied with the way the police dealt with the matter; why were you not satisfied.
- b** Was the car recovered
- c** Was something stolen; value of property stolen; was something damaged; value of damage
- d** Was anything stolen; number of offenders; whether offender known; whether weapons used; what weapon.
- e** Whether pickpocketing
- f** hat happened; was it considered a crime; number of offenders; whether offenders known; who was offender; was weapon used; what weapon.

Other offenses

Consumer fraud

Corruption

Items on police, prevention and protection

Do police do a good job in local area

Are the police helpful

Recommended sentence for burglar, and length of prison detention

Firearm ownership, type of firearm and reason for ownership

Security measures against burglary

Personal and household information

Age

Gender

Household size

Town size

Type of house

Vehicle ownership

Occupation

Years of formal education

